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Dear Diane,

Instead of all the things I should be doing, I'm writing you a chatty letter and then I'll respond to yours of the 13th. This morning I saw the Kirkwood on Shaw, which I didn't read until recently, and that brought all sorts of things to mind. So, after driving Lil to her office, I'm home, haven't even looked at the morning paper, and we're off! However, I'm not going to take time to correct my typing errors. You appear to have enough time to puzzle them out anyway. And I've just got to find enough time to get outside for some exercise. It has been colder than usual here and wet until a few days ago. The earth is a deepfreeze. So, I'm chopping down trees that are in the way and then cutting them into wood for the fireplace. Good exercise, something that has to be done so we can have a garden this spring, and the fireplace is fun nights. Kept it going all day yesterday. You oughta see me felling trees! Never anything like it! You know I hurt my back in a boating accident in 1959, so I not only have to be careful with it but I can't stay bent over very long. In addition, taking out the roots of trees is a bit too much work. I take the trees off level with the earth. Of all I've taken down, and they are many, this place having been abandoned for some time and never properly tended before that, there is only one stump I can remember that is not so close to level with the surface of the earth that I can't go over it with a lawn mower. To do this I chop from my knees. Yup, I don't stand at the trees, I kneel. Even see anyone swing an axe from his knees? It is kinda cold on the knees these days, but I do it. Axe and machete. And two pairs of pants for insulation.

Don't know if you read the Kirkwood book, but knowing you I doubt it. He maybe be something in other fields, but in this one he is so bad I'm satisfied publication had to be subsidized. He has an enormous and poorly-hidden ego which drives him to all sorts of insanities and stupidities, like recounting all the times he got drunk in N.O., with whom and ~~xxx~~ on what, for all the world as though it had meaning or relevance, has the book overloaded with all sorts of inanities and ~~xxxx~~ boring details about childish trivialities, understands little, didn't know what to look for, and didn't know what he had on the few cases he could not avoid blundering into something. He barely mentions Tom Rafferty's roomie. He did have a long interview with the other guy with whom you went to the Lafayette football game the day after the night of a big fire, but that told him nothing because he knew nothing but hate and because he was incapable of understanding. In other words, if you haven't read the book, don't waste your time.

He has bare mention of one of the three women who led to Haggerty's downfall. Last time I stayed at Matt's, she pulled in with a couple of dozen others for a party to begin at what is normally bedtime. Unusually attractive, quiet girl. I'd never have thought she was a whore. She was also the first to leave. Suppose a business engagement now that I know more about her. But I've never seen so prolonged a leave-taking. When she announced she had to go and everyone yelled, "Oh, no!" she laughed and said "the way I say goodbye take a long time." It did, too. She sat on the lap of every man there and kissed him goodnight for at least five minutes per man.

Several times you have indicated fear of Big Jim and concern about my telling him something. Forget it. You never understood our relationship. I don't know he told you what, but it wasn't what everyone assumed. Most of the time we barely talked to each other. At first he was as impressive to me as he is to most, but the more I saw of him and what he was doing and saying, the more I realized that he could not be depended upon. With that crazy thing about Raul came an even sharper change. I'd love to have what happened when I blew my stack about that on tape. I don't think that he or his boxer sidekick have ever been talked to that way, or that such words have often been used in the NOAC Hunt Room without being followed by blows. That was after I took Jack into town from your home the one time I saw him there. Reminds me, he never made the print of that beautiful picture of Kelley he took with the pigeons in Jackson Square. That picture, perhaps by accident, was really a work of art. I saw practically nothing of him after that night, if I ever saw him again, and I neither saw nor heard from Bernie or the other Jack after that. Nor from the prof with whim I stayed before moving in with Marge nor the fink of the same name. I did see Marge the trip on which I last saw you. Same and flakey as ever, only divorced again.

Didn't get a chance to go over some of day before yesterday's mail, untilk last night. I was surprised to learn that Little Jim has left Big Jim and town. Don t know why but the switch was not a career advancement. I was sent a clipping on it, but not from N.O. I never hear from anyone there any more. I guess thatk in the office the line was laid down and everyone knows he'd better follow it. For more than four years I hear only when they need help badly enough to ask for it, which they don t like to do.

Matt is in California after a story-book two years with his family on that 32-foot boats, which took them to Africa and back, through four hurricanes. There was recently an interesting letter from him about this in a San Francisco paper. Great guy, real human.

Again you were not responsive. For one example, I asked you if you would like some books to read of it you want a small radio I don't really need and if you are allowed to have them. I would imagine that time can be pretty oppressive there, eyt you said nothing. Make an effort to get on the same wavelength. With or without a word I taught you, ellipsis.

I do know what isolation is, only the men from whom I generally hear when they are there, all in more famous hostelries, generally call it the hole. One of them recently had a 60-day reservation and used almost all of it. Another complained to the management about the food with some vigor and had his reservation changed because of it, but not for anything like 60 days. Never having enjoyed such accomodations, I have no personal knowledge. However, I'm prepared to assume that from the prof's couch to Marge's slave quarters to the mountains and woods on route 8, anything is better.

In recent years I have learned a bit about the grapevines and the kinds of fruit they can bear. Not too long ago I went to another mountain-region lodge and before I left had interviewed two residents of whose existence I hadn t even known when I entered. Sometimes, however, the kinds of uses that are frowned upon, can lead to severe retribution. So, I hesitate to encourage it. I would encourage regular eating, with special concern for vitamin-intake and protein content. I think you probably have special needs for both. I've no special/affection for Pakistanis, refugee or others.

You report new hassles with your folks. Maybe this gives you a temporary feeling of relief, but in the long run I think it is not good and can be needlessly hurtful. Try to control and restrain yourself. You then go into a cajun tirade that makes little sense, although I think I can read you. If I do, I knew a bit about it but not from you and not from there alone. From elsewhere I have carbon copies and involving a branch you fail to name. I have my own way of dealing with these kinds of things when I can and when it seems worth doing. Once there was a luger waiting and another time a forytfive, but both did not go off. So, instead of worrying about the hurt to me, which I've survived, as you see, write. I've talked to others whose stomachs couldn't take being part of it and thus learned a little about those you once described as having a publisher whose name you didn't recall. You then attributed your information tha to the blood one of your football dates. I think you could now tell me more about this. Ordinarily I would be curious about this kind of thing. Right now more than curious because what happened to you at about the same time also happened to someone else closer to me, where I am in a better position. There are now also other reasons. So your dad's head was being played with by one of big brother's sons. You know, I was always a bit curious about a guy you did a bit more than date for a couple of months. He was generally out of town when I was there, or was told this. Corn and wheat man, among other things, from where he was said to work. Wasn't his office at Gravier and Camp? Anyway, if you are repentant and if you would serve yourself, please make like Salinger. Only Holden barred. No delusions.

The mind games you talk abou t are not entirely strange to me. Work on them is at least 30 years old and even includes forms of life said to be lower than man, although I sometimes wonder about that. One of them worked on you in a way you havengt realized. I tell you again you have nothing to fear from Jim, as I also tell you that what you were told about his noodle came from the right sieve but the wrong screen. He was not section-eighted but today he would be and rightly. Credit is probably due them. The line is a thin one under good conditions. I am not at all certain that they are going to put him away. I say this for reasons other than that they were too arrogant with their own fixer-upper. That they were, causing an international incident. I say this even though I have good authority for believing another will surface at the appointed time. At least one.

But this is one area where you were screwed by your own people, and with a meathook. First of all, before doing anything else I made an arrangement that I think is still enforceable, although I don't think it will ever be necessary. It was lived up to. Let me remind you of a stupid thing that was sent to him. I got it immediately, so that could not be used. There was no sweat. Remember the boy with the thing about doorknobs? Wasn't I able to keep my word to him? He wasn't touched, even if three efforts were made before I learned about it. By now you should understand clearly enough that the record exists only because your people saw to it. He had no interest in you and none in getting you. If you had delayed only a little bit running to Milton there would have been nothing to it except a scalp at your belt. When I couldn't talk to you and your dad wouldn't talk, I did use an intermediary, one well-known to Milton. I never heard from him. Everything I did was on the up-and-up. I never work any other way. So, you have been talked into an irrational belief. You should also understand that over irrational people do have consistent behavior patterns and those who know them can often predict what they will and will not do. I'm telling you to worry about the present, not that aspect of the past. Yet I must say that this makes me wonder even more about Milton and who he really served.

In talking about the interest in getting him you do not say why. I don't think he really understands, either. I think I do. There was more than one reason. I don't know if you do, but if you do, I can't recall your ever having indicated it.

You probably are not much for the Bible, but I remind you of my favorite book, Ecclesiastes (also JFK's, Catholic that he was and Old Testament that it is). It says there is a time and a place for everything, as indeed there is. Thus it also says that it can be a mistake to elect the wrong time, to put off for the future what can be done now. Some things can and should be done now, some can't. For those that can be now, consider whether in some cases there is not compelling reason for doing them now.

I have written Scott. If you have not heard from him by the time you get this, how about telling me how you got him, etc. I'll be writing him again as soon as I can. I felt that because of your medical needs I had to write him promptly and did, if incompletely.

You mention your brother-in-law who, as I remember, you told me is a doctor. I don't want to tell you what to do and not to do as regards your family, but I do urge you to take first things first. Ecclesiastes again, huh? Your first need seems to be medical. If by the time you get this you have had no real care, I think you should consider getting in touch with him so that he can come and get that tended to immediately. On that there is no reason for what you call total family warfare.

There may be some other things I can try, but I am reluctant to without knowing more, without hearing from Scott and without your assent. If you have doubts about him or if he does nothing, I may be able to arrange for another attorney there, even though I know none personally and have never been there. Not Percy Foreman, who'd got the key lost on you. (He doesn't like me, either.)

In writing Scott I told him of your medical history and a bit about the Tommy B deal, which in the end he'd have to know about anyway; a little about your past, including Clarence and his business(shucks, I forgot that Monda!); and that while I'd not vouch for everything you had ever said, what I checked out stacked. I tried to impress upon him an urgent medical need, right now. I'm sorry I'm in too bad shape to phone him, for the pressures I feel have been great and in financial areas effective.

Please try to put your head together on all of this. I think the advice I have given you is sound and that you should follow it rather than later looking back with regrets.

If you want any of the ellipsis explained, ask. The commandwheat man is a Cargill guy with whom I understand she was shacked up for a while. He may or may not have been her big thing. If he was not, I can't really guess, assuming there was such. Maybe a union leader, comes back now, also possible. If there was Harold Weisberg was a hot flame. I am not unaware of the possibilities of a puton.